

Wisconsin electronics manufacturer boosts productivity, quality and employee retention



Harry Lum, owner of Convenience Electronics Inc. (CEI), McFarland, credits the help of UW-Extension's Phil Jackson, a Wisconsin Small Business Development Center counselor.

[Convenience Electronics Inc.](#) [1] (CEI) in McFarland, Wis., has a lot to boast about these days. In less than six months, CEI eliminated a \$700,000 production backlog and achieved 100% on-time shipping. It also overcame operational challenges including component shortages, costly rework due to unacceptable quality issues and low productivity.

And it ended high employee turnover, ultimately adding 15 new employees. In January 2012, CEI moved into a new 12,000-square-foot manufacturing and office space. Additional facility expansion may be on the horizon, according to CEI owner Harry Lum, who expects to triple sales in five years.

How did CEI turn things around in a downturned economy? CEI, a custom wiring harness and electronic assembly solutions provider, wasn't afraid to make necessary improvements and changes, and it sought assistance from UW-Extension's Phil Jackson, a counselor in the [Wisconsin Small Business Development Center Network](#) [2] (SBDC) managed by UW-Extension.

To assist CEI in implementing a process for improvement, Phil interviewed CEI's key employees and several line staff. He then conducted a series of seven meetings.

"He designed the meetings specifically for Convenience Electronics, addressed our concerns," Harry says. "I was impressed that it wasn't just a cookie cutter presentation. He personalized it and made it applicable to us."

A formal training program that focused on leadership skills, communications, setting goals and reviewing progress was developed for managers, leads and prototype staff. Enhanced communication and leadership skills elevated employee morale and ended the high turnover the company had been experiencing.

Today CEI employs 47 people. Its customer service and manufacturing managers continue to hold daily meetings to stay on top of operational and manufacturing issues.

In the first half of 2012, CEI reported record sales revenues and billings, which are projected to exceed \$4 million, up 28% from 2011 sales. To support its growing operations, CEI is finalizing a \$100,000 lease for additional manufacturing equipment.

Harry attributes the company's impressive turnaround to the performance improvements achieved through the SBDC-facilitated training sessions. As his company continues to grow, he considers the SBDC and Phil a valuable resource.

The success of CEI has not gone unrecognized.

As a minority-owned business, CEI was selected as a finalist for the Marketplace 2012 "Outstanding Large Business" Award. The recognition is a credit to CEI's unwavering focus on the customer, adding value to its customer's products with high-quality manufacturing and on-time delivery at a fair price.

For information please contact us at:

Toll-free Wisconsin Business AnswerLine: 1-800-940-7232

E-mail via online form at: <https://secure.wisconsinsbdc.org/busanswer/> [3]

Links:

[1] <http://www.convenienceelectronics.com/>

[2] <http://www.wisconsinsbdc.org/SBDC/AboutUs.htm>

[3] <https://secure.wisconsinsbdc.org/busanswer/>